

THE BEACON

FOR SCHOOL AND HOME

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"I see some sleds," said Mother Brown,
"All filled with girls and boys;
They laugh and sing,
Their voices ring,
And I like the cheerful noise."

The Rotten Prop.

BY RUBY HOLMES MARTYN.

OLIVER was looking for work. He had walked all the way from Dunstable without finding any one in need of his services. There had been one possible opportunity in Chepachet, but that was closed when the man learned Oliver's lack of proper references. Talk of good intentions would not suffice for him. So the boy walked on, and at Winslow's Bayford Grocery he asked for a chance to show his willingness and strength. Mr. Winslow looked keenly at him over gold-bowed glasses.

"I am wanting a boy your size," he said. "I want a fellow who would be handy at all sorts of things. A country grocer has to be Jack-for-many needs and I need a helper-lad who gets hold of that idea first thing and goes by it."

Oliver was eager for the place. He had thought of nothing that appealed to him so keenly as this.

"Got any references?" added Mr. Winslow.

When that question was asked Oliver determined to profit from the Chepachet experience. One name which he had heard spoken respectfully on the way stuck in his memory, and he reassured the contemplated falsehood by another falsehood that references never were looked into. He was going to make good, so a starting prop like that really would not matter. Oliver meant to make good at Winslow's Grocery.

"Squire Baxter of Chepachet will tell you I'm all right," he lied glibly.

"The job's yours," said Mr. Winslow, promptly.

The store door was opened. A boy larger than Oliver entered hurriedly and came to Mr. Winslow with his worn cap in hand.

"I heard you wanted a boy, sir, and I'd like to try the job," he said.

"Too late, Jimmie. I've just hired this Oliver Holt. If you'd come five minutes before, the try would have been yours," said Mr. Winslow, and Oliver felt sure he was sorry things had not happened that way.

"I didn't hear about it until three minutes ago," smiled Jimmie bravely. "I'm going to try for a place in Chepachet but this would have been near home, and mother'd like to keep me handy."

"I know, lad," he said, and then added a bit of information. "Squire Baxter's recommending Oliver."

Oliver wished hotly that Mr. Winslow would not proclaim that broadcast. He had counted on silence until he made good, and then if the rotten prop broke out his foundation would supposedly be firm enough to stand alone. That was the way Oliver reasoned with his uncomfortable conscience.

For several days work at the Grocery did go smoothly. The customers liked Oliver, and he did his best to please them. He began to feel quite settled in Bayford. Mr. Winslow was satisfied with his work, and his boarding-place was a real home to the wandering boy. He had never thought life could be so full of pleasantness.

Then one cold, blustering, storm-threatening day he was sent to deliver a large

hurry-order three miles from the village. A new family had moved to Gates Farm and wanted the Bayford Grocery to provision them.

"Hitch Brand to the pung and get back soon's you can. You ought to make the trip an hour before candle-lighting," said Mr. Winslow, coming out to scan the leaden sky and make a prognostication. "It'll begin to snow about the time you start back."

Oliver followed the directions and then, wrapping himself in a warm coat, started out. Brand was a young horse purchased by Mr. Winslow only a few days before Oliver's arrival at Bayford. Not having been exercised for a day, Brand pulled restlessly, and Oliver was too glad of the good pace to find fault. By the time the provisions were left with the new housekeeper at Gates Farm it was snowing fast. The road was unfamiliar, and at some

corner either Oliver or Brand left the nearest way to Bayford, and it was some time before Oliver discovered the mistake.

"You kept going as if you were on the home road," he told Brand.

And the horse pulled at the reins as if he wanted to keep right on that way.

"Perhaps Brand does know what he's up to. They say if you hit a horse and let him take his own head he'll bring up at home," concluded Oliver, whose dread of being lost in the storm tempted him to forget kindness.

There was no whip in the pung, so he drove Brand to the side of the road and managed to cut a birch switch from a bush. He hit the horse one sharp clip, and then another, and then a third. At the first smart Brand shook himself, at the second he started, and at the third bolted wildly away through the snow. Unprepared for quite such a demonstration of vitality and strength, Oliver's hold on the reins was not secure enough to keep them in his hand, and the ends went flying out over Brand's back, startling him to greater speed.

"Whoa! Whoa!" yelled Oliver, who was on his knees, clinging to the dashboard, for by that time the pung was lurching from side to side as one runner or the other caught on a crust under the new fall of soft snow.

Oliver racked his brains to think of some way to get hold of the trailing reins, but every attempt was fruitless. He thought of jumping into a snowbank, but then Brand would go plunging on at the same wild gait, and Oliver was plucky enough to see his charge through the catastrophe. They might better reach home in company, and he would take the medicine of punishment. There was no one passing on that lonely by-road, and no house to be seen. Once Oliver caught sight of a finger-post, but its letters were obliterated by the swirl of snow. But the highway seemed wider.

They passed through a stretch of woods already growing shadowy with oncoming night, and the boy knew candle-lighting time must be near. Indeed, there was a lighted house window near the road. Oliver yelled lustily for help, but was so surprised when Brand turned in between two snowed-under gate posts that the sudden swerve flung him into the bottom of the pung. Somewhere there was the creak of an opened door and a merry voice hailed him.

"Made port, friend?"

Brand whinnied, and Oliver picked himself from the pung bottom, bound to face a stranger with the best grace possible.

"The horse brought me here," he started to explain.

"Land of poverty! If 'tisin't Brand I sold to Winslow's Grocery in Bayford. Of course he came home if there was trouble. And"—A kind-faced gentleman approached the pung and peered through the swirl of snow. "You must be the new boy! Jimmie! Here! Jimmie!"

A stable door was rolled open from the inside and Brand went in promptly. Cold and tired and dismayed, Oliver got stiffly down to the floor. The kind-faced gentleman was there, and a boy with a lighted lantern. The boy was Jimmie!

"Hello!" he said smiling.

"Hello," returned Oliver. "Where am I?"

"At Squire Baxter's place in Chepachet. I'm his chore boy."

"You told Squire Baxter how I used his name!" cried Oliver, guessing the identity of the kind-faced man, and remembering his surprised interest in the Winslow Grocery boy.

"I never did!" retorted Jimmie, flushing.

"I smelled a rat when Mr. Winslow phoned over to back Jimmie up for getting this job," said the Squire. "You better get at the details, Noll!"

Oliver found that the honest statement of his fault relieved him. He realized that he never could have made good with that rotten prop of a lie at the foundation of his career.

"I'm going to start square on the next job if I walk over the Rocky Mountains before I get it," he declared vehemently. "Jimmie must go back and take the Winslow job!"

"If you mean that, let's send Jimmie over to Winslow's with the team and you try choring here. Jimmie's needed over there near home and it's up to you to give him that best chance. I'm willing to think you're going to be honest clear through after this," said the Squire.

"I am!" said Oliver.

And he kept that word.

February Twenty-Second.

IF to-day it were our privilege to call upon the living Washington and offer him our congratulations, how eagerly we should go, and in what crowds! We know him better than his contemporaries, and regard him more highly; yet because he seems remote in time, we omit the pilgrimage to him that we ought to make. Not all, however; there are some who remember.

A few years ago a Russian immigrant girl landed in Boston. Her family, once in good circumstances, was miserably poor.

The children were hungry for learning that had been denied them, the parents eager for decencies of life they could not buy. Only by the most extraordinary pertinacity had they reached America at all.

On the second day after they landed, a little girl—a stranger—offered to conduct the newcomer to school. Was it not necessary first to get permission of the governor? No. Or of the police? No. Or to buy books? No; everything was free. The schools were open to all. This was America.

The little immigrant, now a cultivated woman, has lately told in print the story of what the schools taught her. "As I read how the patriots planned the Revolution, and the women gave their sons to die in battle, and the heroes led to victory, and the rejoicing people set up the republic, it dawned upon me gradually what was

meant by *my country*. The people all desiring noble things and striving for them together, defying their oppressors, giving their lives for each other—all this it was that made *my country*. . . . The country was for all the citizens, and I was a citizen."

Seldom has patriotism been put into fewer or better words.

We need the lesson. We need to be reminded—better still to remind ourselves—of what our country means; of its schools, of the right of free speech, the liberty of worship, the absence of caste. The bells ring to-day to recall memories that should stir us, and that we ought to cherish; to remind us that our liberties came not with softness, but through sweat and tears and blood; and that as this is Washington's birthday, so also it should be, in some measure, Washington's day.

Youth's Companion.



Betty and Her Pets.

BY VIVA CLARK.

I. DICK AND DOWNY.



BETTY was so excited that she could hardly wait for Daddy to come home from the city, for he had promised to bring her a pet, and she had no idea what kind of a pet it would be. Of course she had Peter Pan, the parrot, and Buttercup, the canary; she had brought them with her when she and Daddy moved to the country, but this was to be an outdoor pet. Already waiting for it was a little house with one window and two doors, one a big one, and the other a tiny square one opening into a wire-covered yard. Now what kind of a pet do you think best belonged in such a house? Betty couldn't decide, and when she heard Daddy's step, she ran out to meet him, her short yellow curls flying, and her blue eyes all shiny with excitement.

"What is it, Daddy? Oh, what is it?" she begged.

He laughed, and gave her a pasteboard box with holes punched in the cover, "so it can breathe, you see," explained Betty. She listened and she listened, then she shook the box carefully, but all she could hear was a very faint scratching. She hurried to the little house, and took off the box cover. What do you think was inside? Not "it" at all, but "they!" Two of the dearest pigeons you ever saw in your whole lives! One was light gray with dark bands across his tail and wings, and, oh, his neck! It shone with all those lovely colors that Betty made on the wall when she held Auntie's mirror in the sun. His bright eyes were just the color of an orange and seemed to say: "Look at me! See how pretty I am!" His mate was almost white, with soft brown eyes, and dark flecks on her breast, like little downy clouds, thought Betty. So she named her "Downy" right off. She called the other Dick because it began with D too. Dick and Downy; don't you think they sound well together? Betty did.

After Dick and Downy had looked about for a minute, they began to hunt in the straw for something to eat, for pigeons are like boys and girls in one respect; they are always hungry. Betty scattered some corn

and wheat for them, and then she laughed to watch them eat. For they were so greedy that they choked with every two or three mouthfuls, and then they had to stretch their necks up long and thin to get the food down. And they drank the same way Peter Pan and Buttercup did; one swallow and then up went their heads to let it run down. Once Betty tried to drink that way, but she spilled water all over her clean dress, for she couldn't see how she held the cup.

After they finished eating, Dick did very funny things. He walked round Downy and made low, absurd bows; he backed and whirled and circled with his spread-out tailfeathers scraping the ground; he didn't seem to mind how much he soiled them. Downy didn't pay much attention to him; once after his lowest bow she flew off without even a glance at him. Poor Dick looked surprised and very foolish. But he followed her again, bobbing his little head very fast as he walked, warbling and cooing to tell his indifferent mate how much he liked her. But I don't think she was as indifferent as she pretended, for later she let him smooth all the little feathers on her neck and then she smoothed his, too.

There were several perches in the house, and when the birds were ready for bed, they tried them all, but finally decided upon the one high under the roof, for you know all birds roost as high up as they can get. Then they tucked their heads under their wings, and Betty saw they didn't want her there any more.

She could hardly wait to see what box they would choose for a nest. There were three; a little square box filled with hay high under the roof, one half-way up, and a third on the floor, for pigeons like to choose from several things as well as you do. Betty was afraid the babies would fall out from the high one, or take cold in the one on the floor, so she hoped they would build half-way up. But they didn't build in any of those three boxes, and where they did build, I'm sure you would never, never guess.

(To be continued.)



Silhouette by Vianna Knowlton.

Spottikins.

BY ANNIE ROGERS KNOWLTON.

LITTLE NINA sat facing the mirror in her own room, and it was a very red and tearful face that confronted her, for Nina had been crying bitterly.

That forenoon, while cook had been baking some delightful little cakes for lunch, Nina had slipped into the kitchen and stolen a couple. Nor was that the worst part of it, for when Mamma called her in to question her, Nina said she had not taken them at all. Then Mamma's face grew very grave.

"What shall I do, my darling little girl, to make you realize that, though taking the cakes without permission was bad enough, the lie you tell me is infinitely worse!"

Mamma had talked on and on till Nina felt more ashamed than she ever had felt before in her whole life. She promised again and again that she would never tell another lie, but Mamma only said:

"You have promised so many times before, Nina dear, that this time I fear I must get Spottikins to help me. If Spottikins cannot cure you of this dreadful fault, I am sure it will break my heart."

"But who is Spottikins?" Nina questioned in surprise. "I never heard of any one by that name."

"I shall tell you find out for yourself," was all Mamma would say as she told Nina to spend the rest of the afternoon in her own room. Which is why we found her in front of the glass, looking so very miserable. She cried till she was tired out, then leaned her head on her hands as she gazed into the glass, feeling that she was the unhappiest little girl in all the world.

And then something happened! Her own face disappeared, and in its place she saw a quaint figure that half frightened, half amused her. She turned around quickly and came face to face with the queerest little person she had ever seen.

He was scarcely as tall as Nina herself,

and was dressed in a regular clown's suit of white, almost completely covered with big black spots, while a peaked cap of the same material perched jauntily on his head. In one hand he carried a little pot that held some black liquid resembling ink, while with the other he flourished a paint-brush. For a moment he danced teasingly around Nina, making little dabs at her with the brush, then perched himself on the window seat, crossed his legs, Turk fashion, and said:

"Well?"

"Who are you?" questioned the astonished Nina.

"Spottikins, at your service," and he bowed so low that the tassel on his cap drooped over the edge of the window seat. "Oh!" gasped Nina. "Did Mamma send you? I never saw you before."

"No, and you may never see me again, but I shall be near you. I'm going to try to be your friend, though you may hate me for it."

"What do you mean? You frighten me!" And Nina's eyes grew round with fear. But the face of Spottikins lost all its nonsense, and smiled at her, reassuringly.

"Do not be afraid—I shall not hurt you; and I shall not trouble you at all if you keep the promise you made your mother a little while ago."

"You mean I mustn't tell any more lies?"

"Yes, you must always tell the truth."

"And if I should forget?" her lips trembling.

Spottikins looked very serious.

"I should be obliged to take this brush and paint a black spot somewhere on your face."

"Oh, no, no!" And Nina put up her hand as though to ward it off.

"I shall be as sorry as you if I have to do it; but I have been told to help you, and it's the surest way to make you remember.

Every time you do not tell the exact truth, a black spot will appear, and no amount of washing will take it off."

"But—but what if there were a great many?" faltered Nina, for she realized that it was going to be very hard to always tell the exact truth.

"If there should really be so many as to make you black all over," and now Spottikins' voice was very solemn, "then your very soul would turn black, and though your face grew white again, you could never restore your soul to its former spotlessness."

"Oh, I'll try! I'll try!" cried Nina, tearfully. "I couldn't bear to be really black all through!" And the tears began to fall again.

When she wiped her eyes, Spottikins had disappeared, and she could not be sure whether he was real or only a dream. So she started to school the next morning with all her cares forgotten.

On her way she met Jennie Rich, a little friend of hers, driving her new Shetland pony. Jennie attended a private school, and did not have to be at class for an hour or more. She begged Nina to take a short drive with her, and Nina, though quite aware it was not right, finally yielded. And then, when still a long way from the schoolhouse, they heard the clock strike nine!

They tried to make the pony hurry back, but he was fat and lazy, and it was a full quarter of an hour before they reached the school. Nina hurried in, red and breathless. The teacher called her to the desk and asked kindly:

"What kept you, dear? Were you late in starting?" And because it was the easiest thing to do, Nina answered, "Yes"; but as she turned to go away the teacher called her back.

"You must have fallen and hurt yourself, Nina. There is a black mark, like a bruise, on your cheek!"

Nina felt a sudden, sickening fear. Could it be that Spottikins had kept his word? Afraid to question, or even to reply, she hastened to her seat and began to study. But all too soon recess came. Once in the schoolyard, her friends flocked around her.

"How did you get that dirt on your face—or is it a black and blue spot?" questioned one.

Nina did not answer.

"Fall down?" queried another, and, in order to put an end to it all, Nina nodded.

"Why! Look!" cried out her friend. "You've a spot on both cheeks!"

At this, Nina gave a little scream, and started for the dressing-room. Sure enough! On either cheek showed a round black spot that looked as though it had been painted on! She could see them both plainly in the tiny mirror. She took out her handkerchief, dipped it in water, and scrubbed at the horrid spots; but though she made her cheeks very red, the black was as black as ever.

Her teacher, passing the door to summon the children to their seats, looked in and saw Nina with tears streaming down her cheeks.

"My poor little girl, are you ill?"

"Yes, oh yes! Miss Bland, please let me go home!" And because the answer was so nearly true by that time, only the tiniest spots appeared as she spoke.



THE BEACON CLUB

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.



Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Beacon Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

1746 WASHINGTON STREET,
CANTON, MASS.

Dear Miss Buck,—We would like to belong to the Beacon Club and wear the button. We go to the Unitarian Sunday school of Canton. Our minister's name is Rev. C. H. Valentine. We have quite a large Sunday school. Mr. Shaw is our superintendent. Our Sunday school has twenty-eight men in the service, of which our father is one. We remain,

Yours truly,

RUTH E. MARTIN.
THEODORE A. MARTIN.
MADELINE M. MARTIN.

888 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE,
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Dear Miss Buck,—I would like to become a member of the Beacon Club.

I like *The Beacon* very much, as I think every boy and girl who reads it does.

I go to the Third Unitarian Sunday school. My teacher is Miss Taylor.

I am a second-class Girl Scout and have two merit badges, Pioneer and Ambulance (or First Aid). I am twelve years old and am in the eighth grade.

Yours truly,

HELEN BARNEY.

Other new members from the Canton Sunday school are Pamela Barnum and Dorothy G. Dean.

Miss Bland gave her permission, and Nina tore along the streets, her handkerchief pressed over the horrid spots. She rushed into the house and tried to reach her room unnoticed, but Mamma happened to catch sight of her as she flew up the stairs and hurried in pursuit. She found Nina sobbing her heart out.

"What is it, my darling? Don't cry so! Tell Mother all about it!" But when Nina turned and her mother caught sight of the spotted face, she bit her lips quickly, though she said seriously:

"Are you sick, dear? Is this some disease? Does it pain you? Shall I send for the doctor right away?"

And Nina drew a breath of relief. Perhaps her mother was right! Perhaps it was a real illness, and not the work of Spottikins! So when her mother asked again if it pained her, she nodded emphatically. Once! Twice!! Three times!!! But at each nod her mother's face grew more grave, and she rose quietly and left the room. And then Nina dared to peep into the mirror. She shrank back in horror. Her face was covered with the hideous spots. Did mother know too, and had she forsaken her?

"It's just as Spottikins said," she wailed. "I'll soon be black all over, and no one will love me any more! Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do!" And, crouched in front of the glass that had treated her so unkindly, she buried her head in her arms and burst into sobs.

After what seemed hours of grief, Nina raised a very repentant but still anxious face to the mirror, only to turn with a quick cry and again face Spottikins himself! And what a changed Spottikins! His face was wreathed in smiles!

With the brush in his hand, moistened by the tears that still hung on Nina's lashes, he touched her cheeks swiftly and gently. Then he turned her toward the glass and bade her look. She did so timidly—looked and looked again! The spots were gone!

Wild with relief, she wheeled about to thank Spottikins, but he was no longer to be seen. Her mother had entered, however, and to her Nina rushed in an ecstasy of joy.

"You look as if your afternoon had been well spent!" smiled Mamma.

"How did it happen, Mamma, and how

did Spottikins get rid of those awful spots? No water I could find would wash them off!"

"Tears of real repentance wash out blacker spots than those, little daughter; but I trust you will never need Spottikins' help again."

And this time Nina did not forget.

The Pussy Willow.

BY H. G. DURYEE.

WHERE the hillside of the pasture
Meets its neighbor brook,
Where the eager eyes of children
For the Mayflowers look,
There among the alder bushes,
Bent as rough winds blow,
Caring not a whit for weather,
Happily I grow.

Long before the boldest robin
Wings his way up North,
Long before the snowdrifts, melting,
Woo the flowers forth,
You may see a rosy glimmer
Through my gray buds creep,
For I answer to a summons,
And a tryst I keep.

Orders now to me are given,
Though it's nipping cold,
"You're to lead the way in showing
Winter's lost its hold."
And so that's the reason pussies
Are the first to bring,
With their daring buds, the promise
Of a coming spring.

America has furnished to the world the character of Washington; and if our American institutions had done nothing else, that alone would have entitled them to the respect of mankind.

DANIEL WEBSTER.

He doeth well that serveth the common good rather than his own will.

THOMAS A KEMPIS.

Every gradual commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm.

EMERSON.

RECREATION CORNER.

ENIGMA XXXIX.

I am composed of '24 letters.
My 19, 22, 23, 24, 20, 4, is something beautiful.

My 13, 2, 8, is a boy's nickname.
My 17, 20, 21, 22, is a girl's nickname.
My 8, 11, 18, is an animal.
My 14, 11, 15, 5, is sacred.
My 13, 6, 23, is a number.
My 9, 10, 2, 8, 2, 3, is a country.
My 18, 15, 16, 4, 5, is won in peace and war.
My 8, 4, 2, 9, 9, is something girls wear.
My 6, 7, 12, is a great disaster.
My 1, 23, 21, 22, 23, 24, is a sunken place in the ground.
My *whole* is a famous poet who has his birthday in February.

EFFIE MIDTBRUGET.

ENIGMA XL.

I am composed of 21 letters.
My 14, 17, 5, 10, are a part of the body.
My 6, 21, 4, 11, 12, are a fruit.
My 1, 2, 6, 5, 18, is the opposite of over.
My 16, 9, is a nickname for mother.
My 7, 8, is the abbreviation of street.
My 15, 11, 19, 13, 1, are the vowels.
My 3 is a personal pronoun.
My 20, 21, 4, is a lovable animal.
My *whole* is the best place in the world to live in.

MARY PICKFORD.

A GUESSING "TEA."

What kind of tea makes you safe and sure?
What kind of tea will forever endure?
What kind of tea did our forefathers mix
In the wonderful era of '76?
What kind of tea's for a party so merry?
What kind of tea is popular—very?
What kind of tea is frequently cold?
What kind of tea is exceedingly cold?
And what kind of tea will you need, no doubt,
If all of these teas you should try to find out?
M. L. S.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES IN NO. 18.

ENIGMA XXXV.—*The Christian Register*.
ENIGMA XXXVI.—Fear thou not, for I am with thee.

WORD SQUARE.—H I G H
I D E A
G E A R
H A R M

BEHEADED WORDS.—1. Gear, ear. 2. Fuse, use. 3. Burn, urn. 4. Sword, word. 5. Star, tar.

GEOGRAPHICAL SQUARES.—
U T A H I O W A O H I O
T A L E O P E N H O O P
A L E A W E L T I O T A
H E A D A N T S O P A L

THE BEACON

REV. FLORENCE BUCK, EDITOR

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